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### Religious Liberation in Confucianism

Religious liberation in East Asia is more related to moral attributes and social interaction. As a result, most countries in this region are composed of a people who highly regard ethics to be a crucial factor in the community. This paper analyzes religious implication in Confucian countries and how it has modified their economic growth. A first hand narration of an American news reporter, T.R. Reid, who ended up working in Japan will be considered as the inside source of how Confucianism has modified East Asia. As explained in the excerpt, East Asia's religious affiliation has raised various opinions – relating the influence of their religion to their surprisingly high rate of economic growth – that was witnessed in the region during the closure of the twentieth century. In the narrator's view, religion liberated the communities in East Asia from poverty, backwardness and immorality. This is a consequence of Confucianism of which their leader, K'ung Fu-tzu, campaigned for hard work, education, good morals and equality within the community.

### Confucianism in the Economy and Morality

To begin with, in Confucianism, much focus is put on societal interrelationship. The teachings are inclined to morals and the society's wellbeing – economically. However, this

remarkable belief has resulted to questions by scholars on whether it is indeed a religion or just a persistent philosophical ideology. The orthopraxy of Confucianism is most evident on the lifestyle of people from East Asia. From the inside, Confucianism seems to have had a significant impact in modifying the social order in their communities than other religions in most parts of the world. How the society handles enforcing the required moral standards to delinquents might be part of the answer – explained by the prevalence of corporal punishments in East Asia. The disparities in the crime rates between the East Asian countries and the West is also a critical indicator on how the religious doctrines and cultural beliefs are regarded in the regions.

#### Liberation from A low Economic Status

Religious affiliation has been regarded as a critical driver in the high rate of economic development of East Asian countries. This point of view is even more convincing considering that the countries which are influenced by Confucius' philosophy experienced an inexplicable rate of economic growth almost at the same period. Most archaic traditional cultures believed that servants are born with a pre-destined fate of servanthood and royals are born with the destiny of leading right from birth. A good example is the ancient British monarchy. The teachings of Confucius contradicted with this ideology. The religion teaches an individual gains his position in the society through hard work, education, and utilizing opportunities as they come his way. It seems that the spirit of Confucianism was awakened during the edge of the twentieth century. Reid mentions that among the richest nations in the world, two of the Confucian countries have already sneaked to the top three positions with Japan and China holding positions

two and three respectively. Where most religions believe in spiritual liberation and focus on life after death, Confucianism teaches of liberation in the current life of the believer. Henceforth, religion in the East Asian countries is believed to have liberated the countries from poverty and underdevelopment.

### Liberation from Societal Disorder

As explained by the narrator, East Asia faces an extremely low rate of crimes compared to other developed countries. Apart from eating from your 'own sweat,' orthopraxy in the Confucian doctrine teaches a high level of discipline and morality. The two of these combined gives moral ethics an intense concoction where one has to endure in their own pain even if overwhelmed with financial calamities. As a result, crime levels in East Asia are surprisingly low even on the verge of economic regression – as witnessed by Reid on his interview with the head of police officers in Japan. He exclaimed on the realization that crime rates in Japan were still on the fall despite economic regression that Japan was experiencing during the late nineties. What was thought to be an instinctive aspect of human beings where, in the West, crime goes up with the increase of economic hardships, was discovered to be a myth. The Japanese society – which is deeply rooted in Confucian attributes were observed to be entirely independent of this notion. Religious influence has made the country immune from social discourse accompanied by economic catastrophes.

Confucians hold with a strong moral view aspects such as marriage, education and personal desires. Regarding marriage they view it with respect, not with sacred ideologies, rather, they find it fit that all families be in complete lasting marriages. Whole marriages are, therefore,

motivated by societal demands. Education in the religion is viewed as a way of liberating oneself from low economic status and is really encouraged by its members. It is also taught that personal desire should be kept under watch so as to prevent it from overwhelming the societal moral demands.

### Liberation from End of Marriages

Reid, coming from a society where fifty percent of marriages ended up in divorces was also baffled by the low divorce rates in Japan considering the level of economic growth it had experienced. The US, which is the richest of all countries has the highest divorce rates in the world. The European nations follow, where in most countries approximately 30 percent of marriages do not last a lifetime (Reid). However, Japan has a relatively high divorce rate – sixteen percent. Nevertheless, divorce in Japan is associated with shame and incompetence. Especially when it comes from a woman. With a society where marital respect is paramount for women, Japan has most of its divorced women abstaining from discussions and talks mentioning their marital statuses. A good example is mentioned in the Reid's narration, where a Japanese woman presenter, Tamaru Mizuzu ended her interview with Larry King after she was asked questions of her marital status. Marriage, in Confucianism is regarded as a vow that should be respected and observed. Again, analyzing Confucianism, the conviction of divorcees and other insubordinate members of the society does not come from spiritual judgment, rather, societal. Confucians have come to regard the society's perception of an individual to be very crucial to the extent that they work hard to be recognized as ordinary members. It is, therefore, correct to view Confucianism to have liberated East Asian societies from social discourses such as divorces.

### Educational liberation

From a people believing in hard work and an exceptionally high moral standards, it is not a surprise for them to host the smartest of the students. Education in Asia is considered to be one of the most critical steps in life that defines a person's future. I talk of Korea, Singapore, Japan, China and most recently India. However, focusing on the Confucian countries – the first four of the mentioned, education has become the core drivers of their economies – where many technological products, which were previously dominated by the West are presently developed. It is debatably reasonable to argue that Confucian tradition has led to high performance of students in these countries. To show the devotion that East Asian students have, a standardized math and science exam was done by students from the countries and some European countries. This was 1996 (Reid). Results showed the Confucian countries, generally, ranked top. Where education in the modern society is considered as an opportunity to secure a good future, Confucians spare not this opportunity and approach it with agility and devotion. As a result, the Confucian countries host big numbers of middle class with a small gap between the rich and the poor.

### Liberation from Personal Desires

As mentioned by Reid, Confucius taught of overcoming personal desires over morality. The narrator nailed this aspect of Confucianism in East Asian societies when he talked about Japan's reaction when the Argentinian team refused to go to their country unless Diego Maradona was allowed in. The Japanese were extremely passionate about soccer to the extent that tickets to witness the highly ranked Argentinian team were all taken in a record short period. However, following the stand-off between the Argentinian team and the Japanese government,

the game was cancelled. Most Japanese were contented with the Japanese government's decision to cancel the match as long as Maradona will not set foot on Japan soil. This happened while Japanese had a vehement love for soccer. The people are observed to, therefore, value morality over pleasure. Confucianism conserves the society's influence from pleasure. Consequently, the people of East Asia become immune to editing their law just to find pleasure even if it is for a moment. The East Asian religion seems to have liberated its society from external influence and interference of their law just to obtain what the society desires.

### Conclusion

Confucianism is a religion focused on the society's modification and conservation of the moral requirements of the society. It has made concepts which are prevalent in other non-Confucian developed countries a taboo in the East Asian nations. Confucian religious liberation is set on moral grounds where Confucian communities are molded to be less influenced by civilization and westernization and made to build a society from their own culture. The religious background of the East Asian countries is evidently a major contributor to the miraculous economic growth witnessed in the region. It is a belief that focuses on mindset and earning a position in the society's economic class. It can be viewed to be more of a carnal religion with much emphasis on physicalism rather than spiritualism as observed in other religions. As a result Confucians are directed on a path of hard work by both economic necessities and religious doctrines. The general emphasis on hard work in Confucians is to gain a respectable position in the society and not an outstandingly high social class as in the Western world. The consequence is observed in all Confucian countries – these nations host a record high number of middle class

and have an extremely reduced gap between the rich and the poor. In general, Confucianism perceives salvation and liberation to be societal oriented. Here, achieving good economic status is the goal and having good morals is everyone's desire.